

## Myatt: Five Mournful Reminders.

Compiled by JRW  
2023

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### A Self-Taught Hymn

Aeschylus, Agamemnon, vv.990-1033

And so, although I have no lyre, I sing:  
For there is a desire, within me – a self-taught hymn  
For one of those Furies,  
With nothing at all to bring me  
That cherished confidence – hope.  
And my stomach is by no means idle –  
In fairness, it is from achieving a judgement  
That the beat of my heart continues to change.  
And so there is this supplication of mine:  
For this defeat of my hope to be false  
So that, that thing cannot be achieved.  
In truth, that frequently unsatisfied goddess, Health,  
Has a limit – for Sickness, her neighbour,  
Leans against their shared fence;  
And it is the fate of the mortal who takes the short-cut  
To strike the unseen reef.

And yet if – of those possessions previously acquired –  
A fitting amount is, through caution, cast forth by a sling,  
Then the whole construction will not go under –  
Injurious over-loaded as it was –  
Nor will its hull be filled, by the sea.  
Often, the gifts from Zeus are abundant  
And there is, then, from the yearly ploughing,  
A death for famine's sickness.

But if once upon the earth there falls from  
A mortal that death-making black blood –  
What incantation can return it to his arms?  
Not even he who was correctly-taught  
How to bring back those who had died  
Was allowed by Zeus to be without injury.  
Were it not that Fate was ordained  
By the gods to make it fated  
That when more is obtained it is not kept,  
My heart would have been first  
To let my tongue pour forth these things.

But now, in darkness, it murmurs,  
Painfully-desiring, and having no hope of when  
There will be an opportunity to bring this to an end,  
Rekindling the fire of reason.

τὸν δ' ἄνευ λύρας ὄμως ὑμνωδεῖ  
θρηῖνον Ἐρινύος αὐτοδίδακτος ἔσωθεν  
θυμός, οὐ τὸ πᾶν ἔχων  
ἐλπίδος φίλον θράσος.  
σπλάγχνα δ' οὗτοι ματᾶ-  
ζει πρὸς ἐνδίκους φρεσὶν  
τελεσφόροις δίναις κυκώμενον κέαρ.  
εὐχομαι δ' ἔξ ἐμᾶς  
ἐλπίδος ψύθη πεσεῖν  
ἔς τὸ μὴ τελεσφόρον.

μάλα γέ τοι τὸ μεγάλας ὑγιείας  
ἀκόρεστον τέρμα: νόσος γάρ  
γείτων ὁμότοιχος ἐρείδει.  
καὶ πότμος εὐθυπορῶν  
ἀνδρὸς ἔπαισεν ἄφαντον ἔρμα.  
καὶ πρὸ μὲν τι χρημάτων  
κτησίῳ ὄκνος βαλῶν

σφενδόνας ἀπ' εὐμέτρου,  
οὐκ ἔδου πρόπας δόμος  
πημονᾶς γέμων ἄγαν,  
οὐδ' ἐπόντισε σκάφος.  
πολλά τοι δόσις ἐκ Διὸς ἀμφιλα-  
φής τε καὶ ἐξ ἀλόκων ἐπετειᾶν  
νῆστιν ὤλεσεν νόσον.

τὸ δ' ἐπὶ γᾶν πεσὸν ἄπαξ θανάσιμον  
πρόπαρ ἀνδρὸς μέλαν αἶμα τίς ἂν  
πάλιν ἀγκαλέσαιτ' ἐπαείδων;  
οὐδὲ τὸν ὀρθοδαῆ  
τῶν φθιμένων ἀνάγειν  
Ζεὺς ἀπέπαυσεν ἐπ' εὐλαβείᾳ;  
εἰ δὲ μὴ τεταγμένα  
μοῖρα μοῖραν ἐκ θεῶν  
εἶργε μὴ πλέον φέρειν,  
προφθάσασα καρδία  
γλώσσαν ἂν τάδ' ἐξέχει.  
νῦν δ' ὑπὸ σκότῳ βρέμει  
θυμαλγῆς τε καὶ οὐδὲν ἐπελπομέν-  
α ποτὲ καίριον ἐκτολυπεύσειν  
ζωπυρουμένας φρενός.

Source:  
The Acausal Nature of Being  
<https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2022/10/numinous-way-pathe-mathos-v7.pdf>  
pp.13-16

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#### **A Slowful Learning, Perhaps**

"And what the dead had no speech for, when living,  
They can tell you, being dead: the communication  
Of the dead is tongued with fire beyond the language of the living." [1]

Perhaps it is incumbent upon us to now celebrate, remember, transcribe, only the kind, the gentle, the loving, the compassionate, the happy, and the personal, things – and those who have done them – and not the many things that have caused suffering, death, destruction, and inflicted violence on others. For, so often it seems, we human beings have and have had for millennia a somewhat barbaric propensity to celebrate, to remember, to transcribe, our seeming triumphs of personal pride and of victory over others – be such others some declared enemy or some designated foe – always or almost always forgetting the suffering, the deaths, the destruction, that such a seeming, and always transient, victory over others has always involved, and always or almost always forgetting the suffering, the hurt, the unhappiness, that our selfish prideful desire to triumph, to succeed, causes in someone or some many somewhere.

For millennia so many have been fixated on either our selves – our pride, our success, our needs, our desires – or on the pride, the success, the needs, the security, the prosperity, we have assigned to or we accepted as a necessary part of some ideal, some entity, some supra-personal abstraction.

Thus, anciently, in the name of some Pharaoh or some Caesar, or some King, or some Chief, or some leader, or some religious faith, or on behalf of some interpretation of some religious faith, we sallied forth to war or to battle, causing suffering, death, destruction, and doing violence, to others. Invading here; invading there. Attacking here; interfering there. Defending this, or defending that. Destroying this, or destroying that.

Thus, latterly, in the name of some country, or some nation, or some political ideal, or some cause, or on behalf of some-thing supra-personal we believed in, we sallied for to war or did deeds that caused suffering, death, destruction, and inflicted violence on others. Defending this, or attacking that. Invading here; or colonizing there. Dreaming of or determined to find glory. Always, always, using the excuse that our cause, our ideal, our country, our nation, our security, our prosperity, our 'way of life', our 'destiny', hallowed our deeds; believing that such suffering, death, destruction as we caused, and the violence we inflicted on others, were somehow justified because 'we' were right and 'they' our foes, were wrong or in some way not as 'civilized' or as 'just' as us since 'their cause' or their 'way of life' or way of doing things was, according to us, reprehensible.

Whose voice now tells the story of all or even most of those who suffered and those who died in conflicts four thousand years ago? Three thousand, two thousand, years ago?

It is as if we, as a sentient species, have learnt nothing from the past four thousand years. Nothing from the accumulated pathei-mathos of those who did such deeds or who experienced such deeds or who suffered because of such deeds. Learnt nothing from four thousand years of the human culture that such pathei-mathos created and which to us is manifest – remembered, celebrated, transcribed – in Art, literature, memoirs, music, poetry, myths, legends, and often in the ethos of a numinous ancestral awareness or in those sometimes mystical allegories that formed the

basis for a spiritual way of life.

All we have done is to either (i) change the names of that which or those whom we are loyal to and for which or for whom we fight, kill, and are prepared to die for, or (ii) given names to such new causes as we have invented in order to give us some identity or some excuse to fight, endure, triumph, preen, or die for. Pharaoh, Caesar, Pope, Defender of the Faith, President, General, Prime Minister; Rome, Motherland, Fatherland, The British Empire, Our Great Nation, North, South, our democratic way of life. It makes little difference; the same loyalty; the same swaggering; the same hubris; the same desire, or the same obligation or coercion, to participate and fight.

How many human beings, for instance, have been killed in the last hundred years in wars and conflicts? Wars and conflicts hallowed, or justified, by someone or some many somewhere. One hundred million dead? More? How many more hundreds of millions have suffered because of such modern wars and conflicts?

It is almost as if we – somehow flawed – need something beyond our personal lives to vivify us; to excite us; to test ourselves; to identify with. As if we cannot escape the barbarian who lies in wait, within; ready to subsume us once again so that we sally forth on behalf of some cause, some leader, or some ideal, or some abstraction, or as part of some crusade. As if we human beings, as Sophocles intimated over two thousand years ago, are indeed, by nature, and have remained sometimes honourable and sometimes dishonourable beings [2], able to sometimes be rational, thinking, beings, but also unable to escape our desire, our need, our propensity, to not only be barbaric but to try to justify to ourselves and to others our need for, and even our enjoyment of, such barbarity.

Or perhaps the stark truth is that it is we men who are flawed or incomplete and who thus need to change. As if we, we men, have not yet evolved enough to be able to temper, to balance, our harsh masculous nature with the muliebral; a balance which would see us become almost a new species; one which has, having finally sloughed off the suffering-causing hubriatic patriarchal attitudes of the past, learnt from the pathei-mathos of our ancestors, from the pathei-mathos of our human culture, born and grown and nurtured as our human culture was, has been, and is by over four thousand years of human-caused suffering. A learning from and of the muliebral, for the wyrdful thread which runs through, which binds, our human pathei-mathos is a muliebral one: the thread of kindness, of gentleness, of love, of compassion; of empathy; of the personal over and above the supra-personal.

A learning that reveals to us a quite simple truth; that what is wrong is causing or contributing to suffering, and that, with (at least in my admittedly fallible opinion) one exception and one exception only [3] we cannot now (again, at least in my admittedly fallible opinion) morally justify intentionally causing or contributing to the suffering of any living being.

How many more centuries – or millennia – will we need? To learn, to change, to cease to cause such suffering as we have for so many millennia caused.

My own life – of four decades of suffering-causing extremism and personal selfishness – is, most certainly, just one more example of our manful capacity to be stupid and hubriatic. To fail to learn from the pathei-mathos of human culture, even though I personally had the advantages of a living in diverse cultures and of a 'classical education', and thus was taught or became familiar with the insights of Lao Tzu, of Siddhartha Gautama, of Jesus of Nazareth, of Sappho, Sophocles, Aeschylus, Cicero, Livy, Marcus Aurelius, Dante Alighieri, Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, TS Eliot, EM Forster, and so many others; and even though I had the opportunity to discover, to participate in, and thus felt, the numinosity, the learning, inherent in so many other things, from plainchant to Byrd, Dowland, Palestrina, Tallis, to JS Bach and beyond. And yet, despite all these advantages, all these chances to learn, to evolve, I remained hubriatic; selfish, arrogant, in thrall to ideations, and like so many men somewhat addicted to the joy, to the pleasures, of kampf, placing pursuit of that pleasure, or some cause, or some ideation, or my own needs, before loved ones, family, friends. Only learning, only finally and personally learning, after a death too far.

Is that then to be our human tragedy? That most of us cannot or will not learn – that we cannot change – until we, personally, have suffered enough or have encountered, or experienced, or caused, one death too many?

David Myatt  
November 2012

### Notes

[1] TS Eliot, *Little Gidding*

[2] As Sophocles expressed it:

πολλὰ τὰ δεινὰ κούδεν ἀνθρώπου δεινότερον πέλει...  
σοφόν τι τὸ μηχανόεν τέχνας ὑπὲρ ἐλπίδ' ἔχων  
τοτὲ μὲν κακόν, ἄλλοτ' ἐπ' ἐσθλὸν ἔρπει

There exists much that is strange, yet nothing  
Has more strangeness than a human being...  
Beyond his own hopes, his cunning  
In inventive arts – he who arrives  
Now with dishonour, then with chivalry

Antigone, v.334, vv.365-366

[3] The one exception is personal honour; the valourous use of force in a personal situation. As mentioned in *The Way of Pathei-Mathos – A Philosophical Compendiary*:

[The] balancing of compassion – of the need not to cause suffering – by σωφρονεῖν and δίκη is perhaps most obvious on that particular occasion when it may be judged necessary to cause suffering to another human being. That is, in honourable self-defence. For it is natural – part of our reasoned, fair, just, human nature – to defend ourselves when attacked and (in the immediacy of the personal moment) to valorously, with chivalry, act in defence of someone close-by who is unfairly attacked or dishonourably threatened or is being bullied by others, and to thus employ, if our personal judgement of the circumstances deem it necessary, lethal force.

This use of force is, importantly, crucially, restricted – by the individual nature of our judgement, and by the individual nature of our authority – to such personal situations of immediate self-defence and of valorous defence of others, and cannot be extended beyond that, for to so extend it, or attempt to extend it beyond the immediacy of the personal moment of an existing physical threat, is an arrogant presumption – an act of ὕβρις – which negates the fair, the human, presumption of innocence of those we do not personally know, we have no empathic knowledge of, and who present no direct, immediate, personal, threat to us or to others nearby us.

Such personal self-defence and such valorous defence of another in a personal situation are in effect a means to restore the natural balance which the unfair, the dishonourable, behaviour of others upsets. That is, such defence fairly, justly, and naturally in the immediacy of the moment corrects their error of ὕβρις resulting from their bad (their rotten) φύσις; a rotten character evident in their lack of the virtue, the skill, of σωφρονεῖν. For had they possessed that virtue, and if their character was not bad, they would not have undertaken such a dishonourable attack.

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Source:  
Understanding and Rejecting Extremism  
<https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2022/10/david-myatt-rejecting-extremism.pdf>

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#### **Such A Failure Of Understanding**

There is such a failure of understanding, at least by me [1]. Such a failure because there seems no end to such human-made suffering – such killing, human upon human, such human-made emotionally-induced violence, such destruction – that we men in our majority cause and have caused, world-wide, year following year, decade following decade, century upon century, millennia after millennia.

For millennia, any and every cause – any ideology, any faith, any belief, any personal emotion, personal loyalty, a chain-of-command – has hallowed our violence, our hatred, our killing. Every century we seem to invent some new excuse – or regurgitate some old excuse – for our unempathic behaviour.

Yet compassion, hope of peace, personal and familial love – those now so familiar muliebral virtues – endure and continue to enchant at least some of us. So much so that many men continue to believe in God, in Allah, or in some inscrutable mechanism such as karma. Are we men then the phenotype of Janus?

Perhaps we are. But can our human culture of pathei-mathos perhaps change, redeem, us? Yet again I do not know, and can only once again hope even given that:

I do not hope to turn again  
Because I do not hope  
Because I do not hope to turn  
Desiring this man's gift and that man's scope  
I no longer strive to strive towards such things  
(Why should the aged eagle stretch its wings?)  
Why should I mourn  
The vanished power of the usual reign?

Because I do not hope to know again  
The infirm glory of the positive hour  
Because I do not think  
Because I know I shall not know  
The one veritable transitory power  
Because I cannot drink  
There, where trees flower, and springs flow, for there is nothing again

So I am returned to whence and where I was, the only fallible personal certainty now being personal and familial love.

David Myatt  
2016

An extract from an e-mail to a friend, inspired by Gymnopédie No. 1 (Erik Satie) played by Lavinia Meijer,

[1] εἶτα τὸν τὰ χαλεπὰ γινῶναι δυνάμενον καὶ μὴ ῥάδια ἀνθρώπῳ γινώσκειν τοῦτον σοφόν. "Yet the wise person is the one able to understand such complex matters as seem incomprehensible to other human beings."

Thus it follows – quod erat demonstrandum – that I am still far, so very far, from being wise.

Source:

<https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/2016/12/13/such-a-failure-of-understanding/>

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### A Perplexing Failure To Understand

One of the multitude of things that I have, for years, failed to understand – sans any belief in an all-powerful supra-personal deity – is why I am still alive while people like Sue and Fran – and the millions of others like them – died or were killed, too early. For they neither caused any deaths nor inflicted any suffering on another living being, human and otherwise, while I – and the millions like me, worldwide – continued to live despite having so caused, directly and/or indirectly, deaths and suffering. And in my case, directly and indirectly as my documented so lamentable extremist amoral decades – of violence, hatred, incitement, of being a “theoretician of revolution/terror” – so clearly reveal.

Yet – over twenty years after the death of Sue, and almost ten years since the death of Fran – here I am, still breathing, still pontificating. And all I have – despite years of interior reflexion – is a feeling, an intuition: of the how and why our thousand of years old human culture of *pathei-mathos* is important because – or so it seems to me – it might bring (at least to some others) a wordless intimation of one possible answer to such a perplexing question.

For it is a culture that includes, for example, such diverse artissements as the *Oresteia* of Aeschylus, the *Lamentations of Jeremiah* by Thomas Tallis, and the life – and death – of people such as Jesse James, Mohandas K Gandhi, and Edith Cavell; and which culture, enshrined as it is in *Studia Humanitatis*, can perchance teach some of each new generation that valuable lesson about our human physis, jumelle as our physis is [1] and thus paradoxical as we honourable/dishonourable (often hubriatic) mortals are:

ἄνδρα μοι ἔννεπε, μοῦσα, πολύτροπον, ὃς μάλα πολλὰ  
πλάγχθη, ἐπεὶ Τροίης ἱερὸν πτολίεθρον ἔπερσεν:  
πολλῶν δ' ἀνθρώπων ἴδεν ἄστεα καὶ νόον ἔγνω,  
πολλὰ δ' ὃ γ' ἐν πόντῳ πάθεν ἄλγεα ὃν κατὰ θυμόν,  
ἀρνύμενος ἦν τε ψυχὴν καὶ νόστον ἐταίρων.  
ἀλλ' οὐδ' ὧς ἐτάρους ἐρρύσατο, ἰέμενός περ:  
αὐτῶν γὰρ σφετέρῃσιν ἀτασθαλίῃσιν ὄλοντο,  
νήπιοι, οἳ κατὰ βοῦς Ἵπερίονος Ἥελίοιο  
ἦσθιον: αὐτὰρ ὁ τοῖσιν ἀφείλετο νόστιμον ἦμαρ

The Muse shall tell of the many adventures of that man  
Of the many stratagems  
Who, after the pillage of that hallowed citadel at Troy,  
Saw the towns of many a people and experienced their ways:  
He whose vigour, at sea, was weakened by many afflictions  
As he strove to win life for himself and return his comrades to their homes.  
But not even he, for all this yearning, could save those comrades  
For they were destroyed by their own immature foolishness  
Having devoured the cattle of Helios, that son of Hyperion,  
Who plucked from them the day of their returning [2]

A lesson about ourselves which so many others have attempted to communicate to us, as recounted in a certain tragedy:

οὕτω δ' Ἀτρέως παῖδας ὁ κρείσσων  
ἐπ' Ἀλεξάνδρῳ πέμπει ξένιος  
Ζεὺς πολυάνορος ἀμφὶ γυναικὸς  
πολλὰ παλαίσματα καὶ γυιοβαρῆ  
γόνατος κονίαισιν ἐρειδομένου  
διακναιομένης τ' ἐν προτελείοις  
κάμακος θήσων Δαναοῖσι  
Τρωσὶ θ' ὁμοίως. ἔστι δ' ὄπη νῦν  
ἔστι: τελεῖται δ' ἐς τὸ πεπρωμένον

Thus were those sons of Atreus sent forth  
By mighty Zeus, guardian of hospitality, against Alexander  
On account of that woman who has had many men.  
And many would be the limb-wearying combats  
With knees pushed into the dirt  
And spears worn-out in the initial sacrifice

Of Trojans and Danaans alike.  
What is now, came to be  
As it came to be. And its ending has been ordained [3]

and as described – millennia ago – by a certain poetess:

φαίνεται μοι κῆνος ἴσος θεοῖσιν  
ἔμμεν' ὤνηρ, ὅττις ἐναντιός τοι  
ἰσδάνει καὶ πλάσιον ἄδου φωνεί-  
σας ὑπακούει  
καὶ γελαίσας ἰμέροεν, τό μ' ἦ μὰν  
καρδίαν ἐν στήθεσιν ἐπτόαισεν  
ὡς γὰρ ἔς σ' ἴδω βρόχε', ὡς με φώναι-  
σ' οὐδ' ἐν ἔτ' εἴκει,  
ἀλλ' ἄκαν μὲν γλῶσσα <ἔαγε>, λέπτον  
δ' αὐτικά χρωί πῦρ ὑπαδεδρόμηκεν,  
ὀππάτεσσι δ' οὐδ' ἐν ὄρημ', ἐπιρρόμ-  
βεισι δ' ἄκουαι,  
<έκαδε μ' ἴδρωσ ψῦχος κακχέεται / κὰδ' δέ ἴδρωσ κακχέεται> τρόμος δὲ  
παῖσαν ἄγρει, χλωροτέρα δὲ ποίας  
ἔμμι, τεθνάκην δ' ὀλίγω 'πιδεύης  
φαίνομ' ἔμ' αὐται

I see he who sits near you as an equal of the gods  
For he can closely listen to your delightful voice  
And that seductive laugh  
That makes the heart behind my breasts to tremble.  
Even when I glimpse you for a moment  
My tongue is stilled as speech deserts me  
While a delicate fire is beneath my skin –  
My eyes cannot see, then,  
When I hear only a whirling sound  
As I shivering, sweat  
Because all of me trembles;  
I become paler than drought-grass  
And nearer to death [4]

and as, for example, described by the scribe of an ancient Hermetic MS:

Solum enim animal homo duplex est; et eius una pars simplex, quae, ut Graeci aiunt οὐσιώδης, quam vocamus divinae similitudinis formam; est autem quadruplex quod ὑλικὸν Graeci, nos mundanum dicimus, e quo factum est corpus, quo circumtegitur illud quod in homine divinum esse iam diximus, in quo mentis divinitas tecta sola cum cognatis suis, id est mentis purae sensibus, secum ipsa conquiescat tamquam muro corporis saepta.

Humans are the only species that is jumelle, with one aspect that foundation which the Greeks termed οὐσιώδης and we describe as being akin in appearance to divinity, and yet also being quadruplex, termed by the Greeks ὑλικός and which we describe as worldly; whereby from such is the corporeal [body] that, as mentioned, is of – in humans – the divinity, and in which is that divine disposition, to which it is solely related, that is in character a singular perceivration and untoiling since enclosed within the corporeal. [5]

But will we – can we – mortals, en masse, read, listen, reflect, experience, and so learn? Or will we, as our tragic history of the past three millennia so seems to indicate, continue to be divided – individually, and en masse – between the masculous and the muliebral; between honour and dishonour; between war and peace; between empathy and ipseity?

I do so wish I knew. But all I have to offer, now in the fading twilight of my own mortal life, is an appreciation (perhaps contrary, these days, to οἱ πλέονες) of what some schools, independent ('private') or otherwise, still fortunately do understand is the importance of a 'classical education', and of what may possibly be apprehended by such poor words of mine as these:

Here, sea, Skylark and such a breeze as rushes reeds  
Where sandy beach meets  
To meld with sky  
And a tumbling cumuli of cloud  
Briefly cool our Sun.

I am no one, while ageing memory flows:

For was there ever such a bliss as this  
While the short night lasted  
And we touched kissed meshed ourselves together  
To sweat, sweating, humid,  
Fearing so many times to fully open our eyes  
Lest it all really was

A dream

But Dawn arrived as it then arrived bringing with its light  
Loose limbs and such a reminder  
As would could should did  
Make us late that day for work.

So, here: a tiredness of age  
Brightened by such a June as this  
When sandy beach meets  
To meld with sky  
And that tumbling cumuli of cloud  
Briefly cools a Sun

For there are so many recollections of centuries of a so human love, so many memories of years - centuries - of hubris and dishonour, that I can now only live each slowly passing daylight hour *modus vivendi*:

And the lost heart stiffens and rejoices  
In the lost lilac and the lost sea voices  
And the weak spirit quickens to rebel [6]

David Myatt  
January 2015

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[1] Pœmandres (Corpus Hermeticum), 15:

καὶ διὰ τοῦτο παρὰ πάντα τὰ ἐπὶ γῆς ζῶα διπλοῦς ἐστὶν ὁ ἄνθρωπος, θνητὸς μὲν διὰ τὸ σῶμα, ἀθάνατος δὲ διὰ τὸν οὐσιώδη ἄνθρωπον. ἀθάνατος γὰρ ὢν καὶ πάντων τὴν ἐξουσίαν ἔχων τὰ θνητὰ πάσχει ὑποκείμενος τῇ εἰμαρμένῃ

Which is why, distinct among all other beings on Earth, mortals are jumelle; deathful of body yet deathless the inner mortal. Yet, although deathless and possessing full authority, the human is still subject to *wyrd*

See also Sophocles, *Antigone*, v. 334 & vv. 365-36:

πολλὰ τὰ δεινὰ κούδεν ἄνθρώπου δεινότερον πέλε...  
σοφόν τι τὸ μηχανόεν τέχνας ὑπὲρ ἐλπίδ' ἔχων  
τοτὲ μὲν κακόν, ἄλλοτ' ἐπ' ἐσθλὸν ἔρπει

There exists much that is strange, yet nothing  
Has more strangeness than a human being...  
Beyond his own hopes, his cunning  
In inventive arts - he who arrives  
Now with dishonour, then with chivalry

[2] Homer, *Odyssey*, Book 1, v. 1-9

[3] Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, v. 60-68

[4] Sappho, Fragment 31

[5] Asclepius, VII, 13-20

[6] TS Eliot, *Ash Wednesday*

Source:

<https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/failure-to-understand-2/>

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### One Hot Sunny Day, Almost Mid-July

A beautiful, hot, sunny day and only a few wisps of high white cirrus cloud lie below the blue dome of sky. There is no more work, today, now, and I have spent about an hour lazy - my flask of cider empty - lying in the shade of an Oak in this field of freshly cut hay, no breeze to even rustle the leaves above me; no roads - except two miles distant - and no people to assail me with their sounds, their feelings: to en-press upon me the patterns, the ways, the life, the harm, of that other un-wise world.

Thus, here, I am calm, able to be the belonging which I, we, are, should be, and thus it is that I, smiling, walk the short distance to where there is a small pond, down in a hollow by a hedge and shaded only in one part of one corner by one small Hawthorn bush. Behind the larger, blue, Dragonfly, the Ruddy Darter clings to a small half-submerged blade of grass. But the blue has the better perch - a tall Bull-rush, one among a group of three two-thirds towards the centre of this pond, and every few minutes, the blue flies up, to briefly circle a part of the water before returning to its bull-rush

rest. Damsel-flies - a scintillating light-blue - circle, land, join together, land, around this water's edge.

There is a reason for the blue's wait. A smaller, darker, female arrives and with a loud buzzing of wings, they join to tumble, spin, fly until they break when she hovers toward one edge of the pond, dipping her lower abdomen into the water, again, again, again, there near where stems of grass rise, curved, up toward the Sun, breaking the surface tension of the water. The male blue circles, briefly hovers - as if watching, waiting - and she is gone, back into cover of bush, tree, long grass. He returns then to his perch, but only for a while. He, too is soon gone - where I cannot see - and it is not long before the female returns to perch, almost exactly - perhaps exactly - where he perched.

The Ruddy Darter has flown away, somewhere, and I wait, wait, wait until my legs become numb from the sitting-stillness and sweat falls down, many times, from my forehead to my face. For this July Sun is hot. Now, the she-blue circles, alighting from time to time on water-edge grass, before returning to her perch.

On the pond, a black whirly-gig beetle sails over the greeny surface - while, beneath, near where I sit, perched, watching, a myriad of small grey-things, with two front legs like paddles, dart, here, there, following, tussling with each other among some fallen dead twigs. Something, jet-black, oval and small - a beetle perhaps - briefly breaks the surface before swimming back down into the murky depths of the middle as a Water-boatman glides by atop the surface.



Ruddy Darter

I wait, but still do not see the rare Ruddy Darter. It must have gone while I waited, distracted by the blue. The myriad small grey-things - twenty, thirty, more - have become ten as the Earth turned to move the Sun across my sky. Then only a few remain where I can see them.

There is a slight breeze, now, to break this silence brought by the few calling birds, so hot is the heat of this Sun. And it is the Sun - and thirst, hunger, numbness of limbs - which makes me to rise, pond-ripple slowly, to turn to walk with reluctance back toward that other world.

Having harmed nothing - except two stalks of grass, chewed - I sigh. There are no humans harming things, here: but for how much longer?

David Myatt  
2003

Source:  
Selected Letters of David Myatt  
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